

Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

FILED/ACCEPTED

MAY 18 2010

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Re: CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn, and Baker,

Video Relay Service allows deaf individuals to communicate by phone in American Sign Language. This lifealtering broadband service is a vital link that connects deaf people to the hearing community.

Ensuring that deaf individuals have access to VRS and encouraging improvements in VRS should be a high priority for you as Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the FCC to make available to all deaf individuals nationwide "functionally equivalent" communications.

You will soon determine the future of VRS. When you set the VRS rate, you will determine whether America makes progress toward the statutory goals of functional equivalence, nationwide access, and inclusion - or force deaf users to revert to TTY communications. And, you will determine whether VRS fulfills its potential to drive broadband adoption by the deaf, even in the face of disproportionate poverty, disenfranchisement, and isolation.

I was deeply disturbed to see the Commission's recent Public Notice on VRS rates. These proposals will push VRS providers into bankruptcy and mean an end to VRS.

You should be increasing the availability and use of VRS, not cutting back. You should adopt a rate that encourages continuing improvements in VRS technology. Recent developments in VRS are a good example of how the service can be improved, such as enhanced 911 services, 10-digit numbering, a larger and better trained pool of interpreters, and better videophones with an array of enhanced features. Monthly payments for broadband are a big expense for many deaf people, and instead of trying to cut back on VRS, you should be exploring ways to make VRS over broadband more affordable to deaf individuals.

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List A B C D E

Progress toward functional equivalence will be destroyed if the FCC does not encourage VRS providers to improve VRS and make it more widely available. VRS is a recent and dramatic advancement that benefits those who are deaf, but so much more can be done. It would be tragic if the FCC were to destroy this broadband service that is so vital to the deaf.

I urge you to establish a fair and predictable rate for VRS that will encourage VRS providers to invest in improving VRS and reaching more deaf individuals. The law requires it and it is the right thing to do.

Signature J. Workman Date 5/14/10

Name Jessica R. Workman

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Phone Number 540-381-4008

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Dear Federal Communications Commission,

As a member of the deaf community, I am writing today to support the VRS rate proposal filed by Sorenson Communications. VRS was the first, and remains the best, broadband-based form of relay service. VRS allows me to use American Sign Language, my native language, to communicate across distance. Using VRS, I can make appointments and communicate with my family and friends. Because VRS is so essential in my everyday life, it is very important to me that the FCC establish a rate that ensures that VRS continues to thrive; Sorenson's proposal will do just that.

Sorenson proposes that the rate for all VRS providers be set at \$5.95 per minute for 2010-11 and reduced by 1% for the following four years. Establishing a five-year plan will maintain a stable business environment, enabling providers to set long-term goals, make long-term investments, and improve service to the deaf community. Setting a single rate that decreases each year will ensure that all providers compete on a "level playing field" and become more efficient every year.

Sorenson's proposal will allow VRS providers to continue to meet the needs of the deaf community and to advance the Americans with Disabilities Act's goals of improving technology, efficiency, nationwide access to communications, and functional equivalence.

Sincerely,

Signature

Elmer H. Ewan

Date

5/14/10

Elmer Ewan

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Cape Coral, FL 33993
elmerewan@me.com

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I urge you to establish a fair and predictable rate for VRS that will encourage VRS providers to invest in improving VRS and reaching more deaf individuals. The law requires it and it is the right thing to do.

Signature Paul Fleming Date 5/14/10

Name Paul Fleming

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Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn, and Baker,

As an employee of a Video Relay Service (VRS) provider, I have the great fortune of assisting deaf individuals to communicate by videophone in American Sign Language using VRS. I have seen first-hand that this life-altering broadband service is a vital link that connects deaf people to the hearing community.

Ensuring that deaf individuals have access to VRS and encouraging improvements in VRS should be a high priority for you as Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the FCC to make available to all deaf individuals nationwide "functionally-equivalent" communications. You will soon determine the future of VRS. When you set the VRS rate, you will determine whether America makes progress toward the statutory goals of functional equivalence, nationwide access and inclusion – or force deaf users to revert to TTY communications. And, you will determine whether VRS fulfills its potential to drive broadband adoption by the deaf, even in the face of poverty and isolation.

I was deeply disturbed to see the Commission's recent Public Notice on VRS rates. These proposals would put an end to VRS as we know it. My employer has already informed me that if these proposed rates are adopted, our company would head into bankruptcy. This would be disastrous for deaf VRS users.

The FCC should be increasing the availability and use of VRS, not cutting back. You should adopt a rate that encourages continuing improvements in VRS technology and continues to improve services levels. Recent developments in VRS are a good example of how the service can be improved, such as enhanced 911 services, 10-digit numbering, a larger and better-trained pool of interpreters and better videophones with an array of enhanced features. Monthly payments for broadband are a big expense for many deaf people, and instead of trying to cut back on VRS, you should be exploring ways to make VRS over broadband more affordable to deaf individuals.

Progress towards functional equivalence will be destroyed if the FCC does not encourage VRS providers to improve VRS and make it more widely available. VRS is a recent and dramatic advancement that benefits those who are deaf, but so much more can be done. It would be tragic if the FCC were to destroy this broadband service that is so vital to the deaf.

Recent reports of fraud in the VRS industry are disturbing to employees who work for a company that has operated within current FCC guidelines and has worked to maintain the

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integrity of the VRS fund. The FCC must devote more of its time and energy to focusing on the elimination of fraud.

I urge you to establish a fair and predictable rate for VRS that will encourage VRS providers to invest in improving VRS and reaching more deaf individuals. The law requires it and it is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Brenda Brom 5/9/10
42 Nelson St
Auburn, NY 13021

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Signature Dawn M. Crigger Date 5/13/10

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Signature  Date 5/14/10

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Signature Linda J. Cridlin Date 5-14-2010

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Signature Shirley B. Gillispie Date 5/14/10

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